

DAKOTA PACK

MAGAZINE OF THE SOUTH DAKOTA ARMY AND AIR NATIONAL GUARD • SPRING 2018

LOBO SUMMIT

114th Fighter Wing trains
for future Air Expeditionary
Forces deployment

» TRAINING

- 114th Medical Group works alongside Army medical personnel
- Digital eye-piece increases capabilities of F-16 pilots

» ACHIEVEMENTS

- 114th FW announce Airmen of the Year
- SDNG promotes, welcomes its first woman into Chaplain Corps





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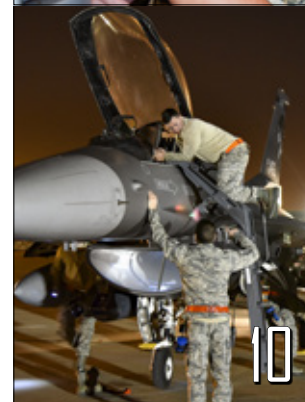
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On the Cover

An F-16 Fighting Falcon from the 114th Fighter Wing takes off from March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, Calif., Jan. 4-19, while participating in Lobo Summit 2018, a training deployment to prepare the unit for a future Air Expeditionary Forces mission. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)



Message from the Adjutant General

I'd like to dedicate my column in this edition to the three big award recipients who were recognized during our South Dakota National Guard Dining-Out in Pierre. All three recipients are truly outstanding. This year's top South Dakota Reserve Component employer, is RENEW Energy, Inc. As a part of their normal duties, RENEW Energy's technicians travel to worksites throughout the nation performing work on wind turbines. Regardless of where their technician is working the week of an upcoming drill weekend, RENEW will either pay for the technician's plane tickets or all the fuel to get home for drill and then back to the work site. RENEW's management team also provides flexibility in scheduling to support their employees' military service.

RENEW actively recruits National Guard and Reserve members as evidenced by their employee's referral bonus for military hires. Their support extends to their families as well. One employee married a service member just prior to his deployment. RENEW energy employees rallied around her and ensured that she was supported during her husband's deployment. This employee, the military spouse, hadn't been with RENEW very long and didn't have much vacation built up but she was still afforded time off without question to attend military events. She was also provided time off when her spouse returned.

RENEW Energy's commitment to an employee's military service comes from the top down. One employee shared a conversation he had with the president of RENEW, Mr. Jim Mikel. During this conversation, the employee mentioned he wanted to get out of the National Guard so his service wouldn't burden the company. Mr. Mikel told the employee that the company would do whatever was needed to support his dual careers. The president went on to say, "Do not make the company the reason you get out of the Guard. We are here to support your Guard career, not make you quit."

RENEW Energy, Inc. is deserving of this recognition for their outstanding contributions to our military services. Their leadership exemplifies the patriotic spirit that is alive and well here in our great state.

The recipient of the 2018 Adjutant General's Family Award is the Greer Family - Shawn, Jodie, Alexis and Haley. The Greer family has been volunteering with the Family Volunteer Group at the 114th Fighter Wing for more than 10 years. Shawn, Jodie and the girls started their journey at the National Guard Youth Camp. They would bring the girls out to partake in the event while volunteering their time as a counselor and medical staff. For the past few years, Jodie has been a staple in the youth programming as she has taken on the lead role for medical staff at Youth and Teen Camps. Shawn used his talents and became a youth counselor. Jodie has also served as the vice lead volunteer for the last four years. Their love of military families has led them to assist with children holiday parties, youth programs, bus trips to the Omaha Zoo, attending countless meetings and supporting our deployed members.

Alexis and Haley have also been active with the volunteer group since they were young. As participants of many of the events, the girls were motivated into volunteering to help with these programs as they got older. They have helped in numerous activities like Easter egg hunts, holiday parties, the Opportunity Auction and the Military Youth Camp. Haley has also sung the National Anthem at numerous military events, including the mobilization ceremony in April 2017 for those deploying in support of the Reserve Component Period - one of which was her dad, Shawn.

The Greers are the "go to" for families when there is a hardship or a need for support. They are role models for our younger families helping guide their path during challenging times. They are extremely dedicated to the service members and their families. The Greer family truly embodies selfless service through their tremendous actions and we are honored to recognize their contributions that make our South Dakota National Guard organization even better.

The Williamson Militiaman Award was established in 1987 by Major General Ronald F. Williamson (retired) to recognize an individual who exemplifies the

spirit of the citizen-Soldier and -Airman as shown by their community leadership, their support of the National Guard, and the defense of our country. Retired Col. Steve Harding was recognized as the 2018 recipient of this prestigious award.

Col. Harding served our state and nation for over 34 years in uniform, beginning with his 1970 enlistment in the South Dakota Army National Guard. He received his

commission from the South Dakota Military Academy Officer Candidate School in 1976. He served in various positions and leadership assignments throughout his 34 year career, to include commander of Charlie Battery, HHB, and Bravo Battery, 2-147th Field Artillery; commander of 1st Battalion, 196th Regimental Training Institute; and commander of the 196th Regiment. He was awarded the Legion of Merit upon his retirement in 2006.

During his tenure as regiment commander, his crowning achievement was advocating for and successfully receiving the mission to conduct the National Accelerated Officer Candidate School at Fort Meade. The 196th Regiment is one of only three Regional Training Institutes in the Total Army School System which conducts this vital mission. He was well respected as a regiment commander on the national level and sat on several national boards concerning the institutional training of officers, non-commissioned officers and Soldiers alike.

He was elected to the Pierre City Commission in July 2008. In November 2009, he was appointed as deputy secretary of the South Dakota Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, and stayed with the Department of the Military when the agency was split by executive order into two separate departments shortly after Gov. Dugaard took office in January 2011. After serving as City Commissioner for nine years, he ran for and was elected Mayor of the City of Pierre last summer.

I can personally testify to Steve's deep passion for, and strong support of, the SDNG. Having the headquarters of the Guard located in Rapid City while the capitol is located in Pierre can be challenging at times, but having a loyal, hard-working and dedicated deputy secretary located in Pierre has been an absolute blessing for me over the past seven years, and for Maj. Gen. Doohen before me.

In closing, I once again ask for your continued support for the safety and wellbeing of all our Soldiers and Airmen, whether serving at home or abroad. I am extremely grateful for your service to our state and nation, as well as for the contributions that our families and employers make. Our state and nation are forever in your debt.



Sincerely,

Timothy A. Reisch
Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch
The Adjutant General

Message from the State Command Chief Master Sgt.

Greetings and Happy New Year! I have recently returned from a seven-month deployment to an undisclosed location in Southeast Asia, and it is great to be back! Now, with that said, it was also great to be on that deployment as well. As many of you know, the 114th FW sent out over 120 personnel to seven different locations during the past year, and I had the privilege to be supplanted with a majority of the wing's Airmen.

It was nice to be able to run into at least one of our Airmen daily as the installation was not that big, but even more so, it was the ability to see them working in their career fields and watching them transform the installation, that was most special.

I would see Master Sgt. Nicole Gruber and Abbey Rotter in the dining facility every day, where I often heard people say the food was delicious! I would also see Master Sgt. Lackas or Ann Berg in one of the two gyms on base, depending on what type of workout we were doing for the day. I also got to see our engineer Tech. Sgt. Casey Hupp do a total transformation of our living sustainment area entrance, as well as construct aircraft revetments. Master Sgt. Ron Krenz and Jason Krcil maintained outdated generator farms, which many of our younger Airmen had never had an opportunity to be trained on. It was not hard to spot a South Dakotan as I traversed the base. They were constantly working hard, had a pleasant word, and a smile on their faces!

My job on this deployment was as the security forces manager for a squadron made up of 230 personnel consisting of active duty, Reserve, National Guard, U.S. Marines, Polish and Italian military, as well as contractors. They were working fight line gates and patrols, main gates and the vehicle search area, and various support staff positions. They conducted internal and external perimeter patrols, resulting in the location of several unexploded ordnances. Several Airmen in the squadron had the opportunity to forward deploy to Iraq for 60-day increments as well. I was so very fortunate to have the groups of Airmen that I did who were proud, prepared and professional every single day.

The jobs these men and women accomplished were challenging, to say the least. They worked in extreme heat, with outdated equipment, yet they never gave up. They continued to look for ways to improve the installation, not for

themselves, but for those who would follow behind them. They spent holidays away from loved ones with minimal internet access and they never complained. They just continued to make a positive impact to the mission of the 407th Air Expeditionary Group.

This was more than likely my last deployment, and to have the honor to work with the members of the 114th Communications Squadron, the Logistics Readiness Squadron, Force Support, Civil Engineering and Security Forces was a true honor. It truly was home away from home, and that made the time pass even quicker. You should be proud of these Airmen, I know I am!



Sincerely,

Jeanne Gacke

State Command Chief Master Sgt. Jean Gacke

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Mother and daughter prepare to deploy together to Kuwait

WAGNER—There are few relationships as strong as one between a mother and daughter. And Tiffany and Alexandra Dvorak are about to have a...

South Dakota National Guard @SD_Guard - Aug 8

@SD_Guard 1-147th Field Artillery conducts live-fire operations in Wyoming. on.fb.me/1wFwHr #SDNG

South Dakota National Guard @SD_Guard - Aug 6

@SD_Guard Army and Air Force members conduct joint patrol training at Camp Rapid. on.fb.me/1SVNqj #SDNG

153rd Engineer Battalion changes command

HURON – Lt. Col. Dennis Bickett, of Vermillion, took command of the South Dakota Army National Guard's 153rd Engineer Battalion from Lt. Col. Trent Bruce, of Sioux Falls, during a change of command ceremony at the Huron National Guard Armory, Jan. 7.



Bickett, who has been a member of the National Guard for 30 years, will now oversee the Huron unit that Bruce has commanded since October 2015.

"I am extremely excited for this challenge," said Bickett. "I have been looking forward to this opportunity for this for a long time. The 153rd has an exemplary reputation that I plan to work to maintain."

As the commander of the 153rd, Bickett is responsible for the command and control of about 870 Soldiers in 14 separate units and communities throughout South Dakota. The 153rd assists assigned units in meeting training, administrative and logistical requirements to maintain the unit's readiness in support of their state and federal missions.

Bickett is employed at Mercy Medical Center in Sioux City, Iowa, and is currently the therapy manager overseeing physical, occupational and speech therapy. Bruce will be assigned to the Joint Force Headquarters in Rapid City as the mobilization readiness officer.

Morrell takes command of 114th Operations Group



SIOUX FALLS – Col. Mark Morrell, South Dakota Air National Guard, assumed command of the 114th Operations Group from Col. Quenten Esser at a change of command ceremony at Joe Foss Field, Jan. 5. Esser has been appointed as the new 114th Fighter Wing vice commander.

Palmberg takes command of the 114th Operations Support Flt.



SIOUX FALLS – Lt. Col. Karl Palmberg, South Dakota Air National Guard, assumed command of the 114th Operations Support Flight from Col. Mark Morrell at a change of command ceremony at Joe Foss Field, Feb. 3. Morrell is now the 114th Operations Group commander.

Jennings assumes senior NCO duties for 152nd



PIERRE – Command Sgt. Maj. Eric Jennings, of Rapid City, assumed responsibility of the senior noncommissioned officer position in the South Dakota Army National Guard's 152nd Combat Sustainment Support Battalion during a ceremony at the Pierre National Guard armory, Feb. 3.

Jennings assumed duties from Command Sgt. Maj. Chadwick Schmitz, of Pierre, who served in the position since 2017.

As the unit's senior NCO, Jennings is responsible for advising the unit commander on all aspects of the battalion's enlisted Soldiers, providing guidance and mentorship to those Soldiers and assisting in ensuring the nearly 500 Soldiers in six communities throughout South Dakota are prepared to handle all assigned missions; to include an upcoming rotation at the National Training Center this summer and a deployment scheduled for 2019.

"This is a great opportunity, especially the unique challenges based on the requirement of the CSSB, getting ready to prepare for a

war fighter exercise at the National Training Center," said Jennings. Then onward, moving into preparation for deployment."

Jennings also serves as the operations sergeant major for the SDARNG's operations and training branch. Schmitz, who previously served as the full-time operations sergeant major for the 109th Regional Support Group will retire after more than 23 years of service.

"Chad is one of the most quality sergeants major that you see around," said Jennings, "Following in his footsteps, with the ground work he set up in this command, sets me up right off the bat."

Rapid City National Guard unit to deploy to Middle East

RAPID CITY – A 28-member unit from the South Dakota Army National Guard has received an official mobilization order for deployment to the Middle East beginning in June 2018.

The Rapid City-based Detachment 1, Company B, 935th Aviation Support Battalion is scheduled for a nine-month deployment where they will provide aviation maintenance and repair support for U.S. Army rotary aircraft and avionics systems.

The unit will report to Fort Hood, Texas, to complete several weeks of theater-specific training prior to deployment overseas.

Since the 9/11 terrorist attacks, this will be the second mobilization for the unit, which deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in 2012-2013.

Curley promoted to colonel



SIOUX FALLS – A ceremony was held on Jan. 6 to recognize the promotion of Col. Kevin Curley, 114th Maintenance Group commander. On hand to assist with the pinning on of his new rank was his father, retired Chief Master Sgt. Verlyn Curley, who retired from the 114th Mission Support Group in 2000. The Curley family has a long record of dedication and commitment to the 114th Fighter Wing.

Security Forces conduct grenade recertification training

Story by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra
114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office

SIOUX FALLS – 114th Security Forces Squadron members performed explosive ordinance disposal and grenade recertification training at a range near Joe Foss Field, Feb. 3. Members from the 119th Civil Engineer Squadron from Fargo, N.D., led the training. EOD and grenade recertification and training is an annual requirement for Airmen in the career fields using this type of equipment as part of their job.

“We train on this on an annual basis so that we are prepared to use these types of munitions in a deployed location,” said Master Sgt. Chad Harris, 114th Security Forces training superintendent.

The training included unexploded ordinance identification, ground burst simulator (GBS) and smoke grenade training. As part of the training, Airmen spent time in the classroom to learn the basic facts about explosives. They later detonated simulation smoke grenades and GBS at a secure training range as part of their familiarization.

The smoke grenades can be used for various purposes. A couple examples would be providing a cover element in the event security forces members need to move under fire or marking a landing zone for a medevac. The whistling noise the GBS



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra)

114th Security Forces Squadron members deploy smoke grenades during Explosive Ordinance Disposal training at a range a few miles west of Sioux Falls, Feb. 3.

makes is to simulate an incoming mortar, and the explosion simulates a mortar/rocket/bomb strike. In an exercise scenario, a security forces Airman would throw a GBS to simulate various types of attacks and to practice and evaluate proper reactionary measures. The training is crucial for security forces Airmen to learn proper handling, familiarization, and safety when dealing with

grenades and other explosives.

“This type of training is beneficial for the Airmen because it’s not as simple as pulling the pin and throwing it,” said Tech. Sgt. Andrew Glynn, 119th Civil Engineer Squadron explosive ordinance disposal technician.

Proper throwing form and safe handling of the explosives were also covered during the training.

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114th Fighter Wing announce Airmen of the Year

Story by Staff Sgt. Jorrie Hart – 114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs



Senior Airman Katherine French



Tech. Sgt. Tyler Leisinger



Master Sgt. Jonathan Runner



Senior Master Sgt. Duane Vandevendel

SIoux FALLS - The 114th Fighter Wing announced its Outstanding Senior Noncommissioned Officer, Noncommissioned Officer, Airman, and First Sergeant of the Year for 2017.

Outstanding Senior NCO of the Year: Senior Master Sgt. Jonathan Runner, of Billings, Montana, operations superintendent of the 114th Security Forces Squadron. Outstanding NCO of the Year: Tech. Sgt. Tyler Leisinger, of Chester, fire team leader and Active Guard/Reserve flight sergeant in the 114th Security Forces Squadron.

Outstanding Airman of the Year: Senior Airman Katherine French, of Rapid City, crew chief with the 114th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron. Outstanding First Sergeant of the Year: Senior Master Sgt. Duane Vandevendel, of Sioux Falls, first sergeant with the 114th Logistic Readiness Squadron.

A wing selection board reviewed nomination packages and conducted formal in-person interviews of all group-level nominees during

November's unit training assembly. The board selected the recipients from a group of highly skilled Wing unit members. The candidates all provided exceptional service and distinguished themselves as the best in the South Dakota Air National Guard during the indicated period.

Selections were made based on their superior leadership, job performance, community involvement and personal achievements. Their wide-range of accomplishments include decorated combat service, volunteer work in their communities, educational excellence and dedication to making the SDANG the best that it can be.

Each year, the states and territories select their top performers from the Air Guard's more than 105,000 Airmen. The 114th Fighter Wing's Outstanding Airmen of the Year will represent South Dakota when their award packages will be forwarded to the National Guard Bureau for consideration as the overall 2017 Air National Guard Outstanding Airmen of the Year.



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114th Medical Group works alongside Army medical personnel

Story by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra
114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office

HONOLULU – 114th Medical Group Airmen deployed to Hawaii to work alongside active duty Army medical personnel at Tripler Army Medical Center and Schofield Barracks Health Clinic, Honolulu, from Jan. 6 - 21.

The mission there is the care of military members and their families stationed in Hawaii.

TAMC supports 264,000 local active duty and retired military members, as well as 171,000 military personnel, family members and veterans from American Samoa, Guam and the former Trust Territories. They also so supported forward-deployed forces in more than 40 countries throughout the Pacific.

Schofield Barracks Health Clinic has the second largest number of enrollees in the Regional Health Command-Pacific, while supporting its community by providing holistic health care across 10 service lines with 40 different clinics.

The two week deployment allowed the 114th Medical Group Airmen to obtain Readiness Skills Verification training in preparation for a Reserve Component Activation and to acquire medical readiness training. Approximately 15 Airmen from the group worked at TAMC and Schofield Barracks.

“Working at both locations provides our Airmen real-world experience that would not be accomplished during unit training assemblies or a home station camp,” said Lt. Col. Doria Hirsch, 114th Medical Group clinical nurse and acting commander for the Hawaii training deployment.

Airmen worked in several areas of the hospital, such as family practice, optometry, surgery and the emergency room.

“Working in these areas allowed our Airmen to apply their clinical skills to a much larger scale of medical operations,” said Hirsch.

114th Medical Group Airmen not only honed their skills, but they also learned and shared their knowledge with their Army active duty counterparts during their time at TAMC and Schofield Barracks.

Working alongside their active duty counterparts establishes useful joint service networking relationships, engages Airmen and gives them a good perspective as to where they fit in as members of the total force.

“The trip was an invaluable training and working experience for all of us. We were awarded the opportunity to give back to local military communities while working alongside our brothers and sisters in other service branches,” said Chief Master Sgt. Brandi Bethke, 114th Medical Group superintendent.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra)

Senior Airman Kaydra Hart-Bedell inserts an IV on a patient at the Tripler Army Medical Center emergency room Jan. 17, in Honolulu, Hawaii. Approximately 15 Airmen from the 114th Medical Group worked at TAMC and Schofield Barracks Health Clinic.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra)

Capt. Brian Gill, 114th Medical Group optometrist, performs an eye exam on a patient at Schofield Health Clinic, Jan. 17, in Wahiawa, Hawaii.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra)

114th Medical Group Airmen work on a high-technology mannequin with simulated cardiac arrest at Tripler Medical Simulation Center, Jan. 12, in Honolulu, Hawaii. The TMSC provides a place for nurses, medics, doctors and other medical professionals a place to hone and improve their skills.

114th Airmen train at Tripler Medical Simulation Center

Story by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra
114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office

HONOLULU – 114th Medical Group Airmen took a break from the cold of South Dakota and utilized the Tripler Medical Simulation Center, Tripler Army Medical Center, Honolulu, Hawaii, Jan. 12, to improve training.

The TMSC center provides a place for nurses, medics, doctors and other medical professionals to hone and improve their specialized skills. The TMSC supports nearly 4,000 staff members who are responsible for more than 260,000 beneficiaries throughout the Pacific.

“The TMSC is a good place for our medical personnel to build confidence in their skills for real-world situations,” said Lt. Col. Doria Hirsch, 114th Medical Group clinical nurse and acting commander for the group’s training deployment.

114th medics practiced basic medical procedures such as inserting IVs, sutures and proper intubation techniques. By utilizing a high-technology mannequin, members simulated scenarios that may occur in an emergency room situation. The mannequin can simulate a pulse and other vital signs that mimic a human. Members were able to use IVs and a defibrillator on it to practice lifesaving techniques vital to their mission.

Several scenarios were practiced with the mannequin, ranging from a drug overdose to a patient going into cardiac arrest.



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Duane Duimstra)

Senior Airmen Ashley Eickman, 114th Medical Group medic, inserts a chest tube on a practice dummy at Tripler Medical Simulation Center, Jan. 12.

“The mannequin provides us with hands-on realistic situational training,” said Hirsch.

Training on this deployment will help the unit to accomplish their mission of developing and maintaining highly trained and professional medical personnel capable of providing combat medical services.

Lobo Summit prepares 114th Fighter Wing for future AEF deployment

Story by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson – 114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office

The 114th Fighter Wing deployed more than 90 Airmen and nine F-16 Fighting Falcons for their Lobo Summit 2018 training deployment to March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, Calif., Jan. 4-19. Lobo Summit was a temporary duty assignment preparing the 114th FW for the unit's future Air Expeditionary Forces deployment. (Photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)



RIVERSIDE, Calif. – The 114th Fighter Wing deployed more than 90 Airmen and nine F-16 Fighting Falcon aircraft for Lobo Summit 2018 training deployment to March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, Jan. 4-19. Lobo Summit was a temporary duty assignment preparing the 114th FW for the unit's future Air Expeditionary Forces deployment.

Some of the main points of this high-level collective training included: low level flying in mountainous regions, close air support training and night flying training with new digital eyepiece add-on system.

"Lobo Summit was a great opportunity for senior maintenance personnel to pass down knowledge to the next generation maintainers," said Chief Master Sgt. Blake Parke, NCOIC for the deployment and 114th Maintenance Operations Flight superintendent. "We had a relatively inexperienced crew on this trip. There was one or two people in each shop that had lots of experience and for the rest, it was only their first or second deployment."

Since many members of the teams are part time, or traditional Guard members, they aren't given the opportunity to put in a lot of hours working directly and consistently on the aircraft.

"The training we get from these trips is unmeasurable," Parke said. "Our members



get more training and experience out of a two week trip than many will see in an entire career of Guard drills."

As well as the maintainers, the pilots of the unit benefited from this training.

Working with Tactical Air Control Party specialists during their flying missions, they simulated air attacks with CAS. The TACP's primary role is to direct combat strike aircraft against enemy targets.

"This terrain, which is somewhat mountainous, reflects similarly to the area of responsibility that the 114th will deploy to for our AEF deployment coming up," said Maj. Jeremy Doohen, 114th Operations Group pilot.

Along with the benefit of the mountainous terrain, the pilots were able to practice their night flying skills with the use of a new digital eyepiece attached to their helmets. This new technology works with a pilot's night vision goggles to essentially turn night into day.

"It's taking a capability of daytime and incorporating it into night," said Doohen. "Is there still room for improvement? Absolutely. But it's a step in the right direction."

Realistic training such as Lobo Summit improves the readiness of the Air National Guard and develops leaders who are able to support joint force requirements here and around the globe.



Maj. Casey Minor, 114th Operations Group pilot, tries on the digital eye piece add-on that increases F-16 pilots night flying capabilities at March Air Reserve Base, Calif., Jan. 12. This upgrade highlights the Guard forces push toward full spectrum readiness by improving current warfighting equipment.

(Photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)

Digital eye-piece increases capabilities of F-16 pilots

Story by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson
114th Fighter Wing Public Affairs Office

RIVERSIDE, Calif. – Pilots with the 114th Fighter Wing tested out a new digital eyepiece add-on system during a recent deployment to March Air Reserve Base, Jan. 4-19.

The device transforms their existing helmet-mounted displays and night-vision goggles into “smart helmets,” effective in night flying.

“With the U.S. being smart with their military tactics, they look for opportunities where we can gain an advantage and a lot of times that’s at night,” said Maj. Jeremy Doohen, 114th Operations Group pilot. “With this new system, it allows our targeting cueing capabilities to be overlaid into our night vision goggles; before this, there were just night vision goggles.”

This upgrade highlights National Guard forces push toward full-spectrum readiness by improving current war fighting equipment.

“It doesn’t just turn night into day, it makes it a lot easier for you to pick out definition in the landscape and you can see a mountain,” said Doohen. “It gives us the ability to put our radar onto an aircraft or a target and have that overlay within our night vision goggles.”

As a clip-on device, the DEP enables the pilots to transition from day to night configuration, improves situational awareness, provides daytime cueing and displays capabilities during night operations.



(Photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)

Master Sgt. Josh Sells, 114th Operations Group aircrew flight equipment specialist, attaches a digital eye piece add-on to a helmet, while on deployment to March Air Reserve Base, Calif., Jan. 17.

“The technology is moving in the right direction so now we can say, ‘we can try that at night,’ because now we have better capabilities at night,” said Doohen. “It’s exciting. It makes it that much easier for the pilot to accomplish the mission.”

SDNG analyzes process improvement through TAGVISE

Story by SDNG Public Affairs Office

If you haven't heard yet, both the South Dakota Army and Air National Guard had an outstanding training year in 2017 – receiving a number of awards demonstrating its operational readiness and once again distinguishing itself as one of the premier National Guard organizations in the nation.

The SDARNG was named as the first place gold recipient award winner in the 2017 Army Communities of Excellence Awards. Additionally, 23 out of 42 SDARNG units earned the National Guard Bureau's Superior Unit Award. The SDANG's 114th Fighter Wing continued to demonstrate its success as one of the top units in the nation winning the National Guard Association of the United States Distinguished Flying Unit Plaque and the Air Force Outstanding Unit Award, both for the third straight year.

The SDNG's sustained success can be attributed to its commitment to continuous process improvement. One way the SDNG analyzes process improvement is through The Adjutant General's Vision for Innovation and Sustained Excellence, or TAGVISE. The SDNG public affairs office recently sat down with Maj. Mitch Nachtigall, the adjutant general's executive officer and officer in charge of TAGVISE, to discuss TAGVISE, its mission and how it enhances the SDNG.

What is TAGVISE?

TAGVISE is a group of individuals that represent each directorate and major command throughout the SDNG. It's the adjutant general's primary process improvement team. Comprised of a team of diverse thinkers with different strengths, backgrounds and skills, they provide analysis and recommendations for process improvement on a multitude of topics. The recommendations come from "outside the box" thinking with the sole purpose of improving the SDNG. The best part of TAGVISE is that it ignores rank and organizational structure during meetings in favor of personal and professional experience and perspective. This is a powerful tool that allows the team to objectively approach improvements.

How does the TAGVISE process work?

TAGVISE receives an opportunity for improvement from senior leadership...some



of these come from the SDNG smartphone app, others from staff meetings, administrative officer meetings, Senior Leaders Conference, etc. TAGVISE reviews the opportunity and applies tools they have learned. From there, team members create enablers like process maps, mission statements, gap analyses to better identify the problem(s) and construct courses of action. A final course of action is drafted, presented to the membership, and forwarded to SDNG leadership for consideration, approval and dissemination to the force.

Why do we have TAGVISE?

TAGVISE helps make the SDNG more effective and efficient, which has the potential to provide better and more cost-effective training, equipment and service for our service members. The representation from each directorate and major command provides perspective from multiple vantage points around the state on a single topic, which allows for group solutions that potentially provide the most widely acceptable solutions in a process improvement. TAGVISE's ultimate responsibility is to address inefficiencies that frustrate or distress normally healthy processes so that simple tasks don't become undue distractions for those who own them. For those times when a service member feels frustrated, is distracted by redundancy in effort, or simply asks, "Why am I doing it this way?" TAGVISE has aligned itself to remedy those moments

and improve the efforts of our Soldiers and Airmen into the organization's future.

What is TAGVISE currently working on?

TAGVISE is relatively new, beginning in August 2016, so the team spent the first year training on process improvement tools, such as brainstorming techniques, critical thinking methods and process mapping. The team's first project assignment was to formalize the process for the full-time unit staff recruiting stand-to, which resulted in a more efficient process for 2016-2017. The team is currently working on several initiatives, including enhancing knowledge management throughout the organization, improving accuracy and timeliness of travel voucher payments, and developing a standardized process for unit mobilization.

How often does the TAGVISE group get together?

Quarterly, normally the second month of each quarter for 3-4 days.

How do Soldiers and Airmen provide input into TAGVISE?

Any service member can submit an idea through the SDNG smartphone app and it will be reviewed at the highest level. All ideas are seen by members of the SDNG senior leadership and distributed to different teams, including TAGVISE, for review and consideration.

A MILITARY TRADITION

SD National Guard hosts 34th annual Dining-Out

Story by SDNG Public Affairs Office

The South Dakota National Guard hosted its 2018 Dining-Out at the Ramkota Hotel and Convention Center in Pierre, Feb. 1. The annual event brings together Guardsmen from across the state for a formal evening to honor the organization's history and to recognize individual and unit achievements from the past year.

The atmosphere, while formal, includes deep-rooted traditions which lighten the mood and provide both members and guests not only plenty of laughs, but a chance to learn some of the organization's history, traditions and an opportunity to recognize individual and unit achievements.

A video highlighting the many accomplishments made by the men and women of the SDNG in 2017 was shown in addition to comments from Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, the SDNG adjutant general. The National Guard also recognized a family, an employer and a public servant with awards recognizing their contributions to the SDNG mission.

Pro Patria Award – RENEW Energy, Inc.

The awards portion of the evening began by presenting RENEW Energy, Inc. with the South Dakota Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve Pro Patria Award.

The Pro Patria Award is presented annually to one South Dakota employer who provides exceptional support of our national defense through leadership practices and personnel policies that support employees serving in the National Guard or Reserve.

Staff Sgt. Daniel Noldner, a lead field



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Heather Trobee)

RENEW Energy, Inc. receives the South Dakota Employer Support for the Guard and Reserve Pro Patria Award during the South Dakota National Guard Dining-Out in Pierre, Feb. 1. The Pro Patria Award is presented annually to one South Dakota employer who provides exceptional support of national defense through leadership and personnel policies that support employees serving in the National Guard or Reserve. Pictured left to right is: Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, SDNG adjutant general; Gov. Dennis Daugaard; Jim Mikel, president of RENEW Energy; Jim White, ESGR-SD chair; Staff Sgt. Daniel Noldner and Sgt. JD Hanson, employees of RENEW and members of the South Dakota Army National Guard.

technician with RENEW Energy and a member of the South Dakota Army National Guard's Bravo Battery, 1st Battalion, 147th Field Artillery, nominated his employer for the award.

"RENEW Energy realizes the importance of a strong force and provides remarkable support and opportunities to members of the U.S. Armed Forces," said Maj. Lona Christensen, executive director for the SD ESGR committee.

Sioux Falls-based RENEW Energy actively recruits National Guard and Reserve members as evidenced by their employee's referral bonus for military hires.

"Their management team provides the most flexibility possible when planning schedules around an employee's military service," Christensen said. "RENEW Energy's

technicians travel to worksites throughout the nation performing work on wind turbines. It doesn't matter where their technician is working at the week of an upcoming drill weekend, RENEW will either pay for the technician's plane tickets or all the fuel to get home for drill and then back to the work site."

RENEW's support is extended to the families of service members as well.

"One employee married a service member just prior to his deployment," Christensen said, during the award's presentation. "RENEW energy employees rallied around her and ensured that she was supported during her husband's deployment. This employee, the military spouse, hadn't been with RENEW very long and didn't have much vacation built up but she was still afforded time off without

question to attend military events. She was also provided time off when her spouse returned.”

RENEW Energy’s commitment to an employee’s military service comes from the top down.

“One employee shared a conversation he had with the president of RENEW,” Christensen said, sharing another example with the audience. “During this conversation, the employee mentioned he wanted to get out of the National Guard so his service wouldn’t burden the company.

The employee was told by the president that the company would do whatever they needed to do in order to support his dual careers, saying, “Do not make the company the reason you get out of the Guard. We are here to support your Guard career, not make you quit.”

“A second employee cited a similar conversation with the president,” said Christensen. “This experience led him to say, he felt the support then and now from RENEW Energy and as a result of the company’s support of his military service, he will achieve a military retirement.

“Employers are inextricably linked to the nation’s defense by sharing their most precious assets, their employees,” Christensen said. “RENEW Energy, Inc. is deserving of this recognition for their outstanding contributions to our military services. Their leadership exemplifies the patriotic spirit that is alive and well here in our great State of South Dakota.”

The Williamson Militiaman Award – Col. Steve Harding (Retired)

The SDNG next awarded the Williamson Militiaman Award to retired Col. Steve Harding, who now serves as the deputy secretary of the South Dakota Department of Military and as the mayor of Pierre.

The Williamson Militiaman Award, established in 1987 by Maj. Gen. Ronald F. Williamson, recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the citizen-Soldier or Airman as shown by their community leadership, their support of the National Guard and the defense of the country.

Harding served our state and nation for over 34 years in uniform, beginning with his 1970 enlistment in the South Dakota Army National Guard. He received his commission from the South Dakota Military Academy Officer Candidate School in 1976.

He served in various positions and leadership assignments throughout his 34 year career, to include: commander of Charlie



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Heather Trobee)

Retired Col. Steve Harding, who now serves as the deputy secretary of the South Dakota Department of the Military and as the mayor of Pierre, center right, receives the Williamson Militiaman Award from, left to right, Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, SDNG adjutant general, Gov. Dennis Daugaard and retired Maj. Gen. Ronald Williamson. The award recognizes an individual who exemplifies the spirit of the citizen-Soldier/Airman as shown by their community leadership, their support of the National Guard and the defense of our country.

Battery, the Headquarters Battery, and Bravo Battery; 2nd Battalion of the 147th Field Artillery; commander of the 1st Battalion, 196th Regimental Training Institute; and commander of the 196th Regiment. Harding was awarded the Legion of Merit upon his retirement in 2006.

“During his tenure as regiment commander, his crowning achievement was advocating for and successfully receiving the mission to conduct the National Accelerated Officer Candidate School at Fort Meade,” Reisch said to the audience as he introduced Harding. “The 196th Regiment is one of only three Regional Training Institutes in the Total Army School System which conducts this vital mission.

“He was well respected as a regiment commander on the national level and sat on several national boards concerning the institutional training of officers, noncommissioned officers and Soldiers alike,” Reisch continued.

Harding was elected to the Pierre City Commission in July of 2008. In November of 2009 he was appointed as deputy secretary of the South Dakota Department of Military & Veterans Affairs, and stayed with the Department of the Military when the agency was split by executive order into two separate departments shortly after Gov. Daugaard took office in January of 2011.

After serving as city commissioner for nine years, he ran for and was elected the mayor of Pierre last summer.

“I can personally testify to this man’s deep passion for, and strong support of, the South Dakota National Guard,” Reisch told the audience. “Having the headquarters of the South Dakota National Guard located in Rapid City, while the capitol is located in Pierre, can be challenging at times, but having a loyal, hard-working and dedicated deputy secretary here in Pierre has been an absolute blessing for me over the past seven years, and for Maj. Gen. Doochen before me.”

Past recipients of the award include: Former Adjutants General Phil Killey and Harold Sykora; former U.S. Senators Tom Daschle and Tim Johnson; former Governors William Janklow and Michael Rounds; and current Governor Dennis Daugaard.

The Adjutant General’s Family Award – The Greer Family

To conclude the awards portion of the evening, The Adjutant General’s Family Award was presented to Shawn and Jodie Greer, along with their children, Alexis and Haley.

The award recognizes family members who support their service members in a truly exemplary manner while managing family,



(Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Heather Trobee)

Senior Master Sgt. Shawn Greer, along with his wife, Jodie, and children, Alexis and Haley, receive the Adjutant General's Family Award from Gov. Dennis Daugaard and Maj. Gen. Tim Reisch, SDNG adjutant general, during the South Dakota National Guard Dining-Out in Pierre, Feb. 1. The award recognizes family members who support service members in an exemplary manner while managing family, careers, or even hardship, all the while not seeking recognition for their sacrifices.

careers, or even hardship, all the while not seeking recognition for their sacrifices.

"The Greer family is the epitome of the word volunteer," said Lt. Col. Brendan Murphy, director of the South Dakota National Guard's Service Member and Family Support. "They are giving by nature, and do so with joy and goodness in their hearts.

"It's never a question of 'if' they will volunteer; it's a matter of 'what are they going to do next' that gives the essential backbone to the Family Volunteer Group and the South Dakota Air National Guard," Murphy continued.

The Greer family, of Sioux Falls, has been volunteering with the FVG for more than 10 years, first starting their journey at the National Guard Youth Camp.

"They would bring the girls out to partake in the event while volunteering their time as a counselor and medical staff," Murphy said. "For the past few years, Jodie has been a staple in the youth program as she has taken on the lead role for medical staff at Youth and Teen Camps. Shawn used his talents and became a youth counselor."

Jodie has also served as the vice lead volunteer for the FVG for the last four years.

"Their love of military families has led them to assist with children holiday parties, youth programs, bus trips to the Omaha Zoo,

attending countless meetings and supporting our deployed members," Murphy said to the audience prior to inviting the Greer's on stage. "As we look to support our fellow Airmen, we can always count on the Greer's to provide home-cooked meals to families who might need the extra help."

As participants of many of the events from a young age, Alexis and Haley were motivated to volunteer to help as they got older.

"They have helped in numerous activities like Easter Egg Hunt, usually as the Easter Bunny, holiday parties, the opportunity auction, and the Military Youth Camp," Murphy said. "Haley has also sung the National Anthem at numerous military events, including the mobilization ceremony in April 2017 for Airmen deploying with the South Dakota Air National Guard, which included her dad, Shawn."

Shawn is a senior master sergeant with the 114th Fighter Wing where he serves as first sergeant.

"The Greers are the 'go to' for families when there is a hardship or a need for support," Murphy continued. "They are role models for our younger families, helping guide their path during challenging times."

The Greer family is the pillar of excellence when it comes to the [Fighter] Wing and to the South Dakota National Guard. We are proud

to honor their dedication and unwavering support for service members and their families.

The Greer Family truly embodies selfless service through their tremendous actions and we are honored to recognize their contributions that make our South Dakota National Guard organization even better.

SDNG's commander in chief addresses Soldiers and Airmen

As the formal portion of the evening drew to its conclusion, the SDNG's commander in chief, Gov. Daugaard, took to the podium and recognized the SDNG for the many achievements and awards they received in 2017.

"I've always been grateful for the National Guard Soldiers and Airmen," Daugaard said. "I know your service is a sacrifice. Time spent away from loved ones. Sometimes in harsh environments, sometimes in threatening places. Putting your life at risk.

"I know your service is also a sacrifice for family members and employers, who assume your duties when you're away," Daugaard continued. "For every Soldier and Airmen deployed, there's always someone at home assuming more duties as a consequences."

Daugaard shared with the audience firsthand accounts of the SDNG's response throughout South Dakota from the Missouri River flooding in 2011 to the 2014 Wessington Springs tornado, telling the Guardsmen in the room, "You were magnificent."

He also shared how he'd been able to travel to overseas to see SDNG Soldiers and Airmen serving downrange.

"I've seen your service overseas, in the heat of Kuwait, in the blowing desert sands, in threatening conditions of Afghanistan," Daugaard said. "I've seen your comrades in the hospital in Bagram [Afghanistan], and I've seen your families in sorrow... when one of you has made the ultimate sacrifice.

"Thinking back to 1997, when I was a brand new legislator sitting out in the audience, when I first attended this event, I would never have dreamed that I would ever had the privilege of speaking to you," Daugaard continued. "And since this is my last dining out, I want you know how very privileged I have been to attend not just this event, but all the NG events, while serving as governor. It's truly been one of the greatest honors of my life just to be associated with men and women such as you.

"At the end of this year, I will lose the title of governor - I will lose the title of commander in chief - but I will never lose the respect and admiration I have for all of you."

SDNG promotes, welcomes its first woman into Chaplain Corps

Story by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce and Capt. Chad Carlson
SDNG Public Affairs Office

The South Dakota Army National Guard held a historic ceremony welcoming its first woman to serve in its Chaplain Corps at the Huron armory, Jan. 6. Chaplain (Capt.) Kelley Thury, of Mitchell, was promoted and named the new chaplain for the 153rd Engineer Battalion.

"I am just overwhelmed with gratitude," said Thury. "Being a chaplain, being in the ministry, and caring for service members and their families, is a lot of trust to put in someone - and I recognize that. I just hope and pray that God gives me the grace to be able to do this and be of service to any service member who needs me."

Thury's path to chaplaincy has been a long and winding one, filled with highs and lows, all which will help her relate to various experiences Soldiers may be going through.

"Through all of the chaos, I realized I had to keep my eye on the prize and keep going," Thury said. "Eventually that part of my journey would be over and then I could start the new one."



U.S. Army Chaplain (Capt.) Kelley Thury stands to be recognized after her pinning ceremony in Huron, Jan. 6, as the first female chaplain in the South Dakota National Guard. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)

Chaplain (Capt.) Kelly Thury is pinned with her new rank by her husband and new chaplain insignia by her father, an ordained pastor, during her promotion ceremony in Huron, Jan. 6.

Her journey began in high school, when she became involved in mission work, which ranged from reservations in South Dakota to Costa Rica and Sri Lanka.

"I never really felt the call of ministry on my life then," Thury said. "I wasn't thinking this was something I was ever going to do."

While attending college, Thury went overseas again, and it was then that she felt God might have a call of ministry in her life.

After graduating from Northern State University with a Bachelor of Science in education in 2004, she felt the call to the mission field, so she started training with Youth with a Mission.

"Their motto is, 'Getting to know God and making God known,'" Thury said. "How do you focus on who you are and how you can make God known and evangelize throughout the world?"

Between her degree in education and training with Youth with a Mission, Thury went to both Germany and Mexico where she served as a trainer and guide to others going into the mission field.

"Through different experiences and reasons, the door just really blew shut hard on both of those opportunities," Thury said. "I was left coming back to states going, 'Okay God, what in the world? Did I hear you wrong? What's going on? What have I done? What did I not hear correctly?'"

Thury was looking for something to ground her.

"I had always thought about the military in the back of my head but had never pursued it," Thury said. "My brother was in the [129th] MPAD at the time and he said, 'You know, you enjoy photography, why don't you let the military train you how to do it?'"



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)

Chaplain (Capt.) Kelley Thury, 153rd Engineer Battalion, delivers the benediction at her pinning ceremony. This benediction is Thury's first as a chaplain in the South Dakota National Guard.

So she enlisted into the South Dakota Army National Guard as a public affairs specialist and joined her brother's unit, the 129th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment, and in 2010 was off to Basic Combat Training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

"At basic training, I had a drill sergeant who was very vocal about his faith," Thury said. "Right before we left in-processing and were shipped out to our respective training units, he prayed over us. I said, 'You know what drill sergeant? Let us pray for you too.'"

"So I prayed for him," Thury continued. "He was kind of the first one that spoke it out. He said, 'Some of you are going to do certain things in the military, some of you will get out, some of you will become chaplains' and he looked straight at me. It's kind of when I said, 'Yeah. I have felt the call of ministry on my life.'"

Following Advanced Individual Training at Fort Meade, Maryland, Thury would serve in both the South Dakota and then the District of Columbia National Guard as a public affairs specialist. After a couple of years, she decided to move back to South Dakota determined to pursue both the seminary and chaplaincy.

"I touched base with the officer strength manager, and after he sat down with Chaplain (Col.) David Gunderson, the state chaplain at the time, he came back to me and said, 'Low and behold, they've been looking for you. They've been looking to fill a diverse role and you just walked into their door. Let's make this happen.'"

Thury recalls meeting with Chaplains Gunderson and Lynn Wilson at a Strong Bonds event and talking to them both about what chaplaincy is in the military, what she really felt God was calling her to in ministry and

how they might see that happening.

"Let me tell you, I was new with ministry and the military, sitting before two men who were in the ministry probably longer than I'd been alive," said Thury. "It was just incredible to hear a lot of what I really felt God was calling me to do at the time."

In April 2013, Thury commissioned as a second lieutenant and a chaplain candidate. The chaplain candidate program allows candidates to follow a chaplain, be trained by a chaplain in a unit and see what military chaplaincy looks like.

"I wasn't thrust into the ministry of 'Here, go be a chaplain,'" Thury said. "I wasn't thrust into a church and told, 'Here, go lead a congregation.' I was really led through the process by several chaplains in South Dakota. It was an incredible training experience for me because got to see how it works before having to do it. It is a great program."

With the chaplain candidate program going well and Thury attending Sioux Falls Seminary, she and her husband had two children.

Thury was diagnosed with postpartum depression and the remaining path to chaplaincy seemed to be an uphill one.

"It was a boomerang," Thury said. "And quite a struggle trying to balance all of those plates, meeting all of the requirements. I was really feeling God calling me to be a voice for Soldiers, for service members. I had to keep going. That this too shall pass."

Chaplain Basic Officer Leadership Course was the next stop on Thury's path. CHBOLC is a 12 week, four-phased direct-commission, special-branch school at Fort Jackson.

"We essentially go through basic training again," Thury said. "I literally went through the same training and same lanes, only this time without a weapon."

Faith, family and perseverance would see Thury graduate from CHBOLC in 2014 and from seminary with a Masters of Divinity in pastoral care and counseling in 2016.

"I could not have done this without my husband and the rest of my family supporting me in various ways," Thury said. "He was working full time, sometimes two jobs, taking care of the children, from one child to three, all within four years."

"The trust and love he has for me and the support he has had continue to amaze me and I couldn't do it without him," Thury continued. "I couldn't have chosen a better person."

Thury also credits retired Chaplain Gunderson as providing her with support and encouragement.

"He is amazing," Thury said. "He was the one who really had those one liners that always kind of stuck with me. 'To be present with Soldiers.' 'To perform and provide.'"

On the civilian side of life, Thury works as a bereavement coordinator for AseraCare Hospice in Sioux Falls.

"When people come to the end of their life, they have the option to elect hospice service," Thury said. "Hospice services not only provide for a patient while they're living, but once that patient has died, 13 months following that patient's death, family members who have elected it will have follow up with bereavement."

Thury provides bereavement care and counseling with family and loved ones of people who have died. She also conducts community support groups, memorials and funerals, if they so choose.

"I also do pre-bereavement, when a person is alive to establish relationship, and helping them grieve appropriately and walk through that part of that journey of their life," Thury said. "Like any counselor, we love when people come to an awareness of themselves. They're aware of who they are and where they are in life and how they can continue in their journey of life and continue in a positive and healthy way."



(Photo by Staff Sgt. Austin Pearce)

Capt. Kelley Thury stands with her fellow chaplains from the South Dakota Army National Guard after her pinning ceremony in Huron, Jan. 6.

On the military side of life, Thury is now the chaplain for the largest battalion in the SDARNG, the 153rd Engineer Battalion.

"Having the first female chaplain is really awesome, especially in the Engineer Corps where having females in the Engineer Corps hasn't been a long-standing policy in the U.S. military," said Lt. Col. Trent Bruce, former 153rd commander. "Integrating females into the Engineer Corps in itself is historic, but as a chaplain as well, is amazing."

While Thury was aware early in her journey to chaplaincy that she could potentially be the first female chaplain in the SDNG, it wasn't something she was seeking out.

"I've never seen myself as a female chaplain," said Thury. "I've just seen myself as a chaplain and I'm here to serve how God has called me to serve."

"Because of my approach, because I am a female, some people may see me more in a mother role and may be able to approach me better than a male chaplain," Thury said. "Maybe they see me as a sister...whatever they need, I will put that hat on for them and hopefully meet their needs and be a ministry of presence for them."

"As a woman, I have gone through probably anything any other woman in the Guard has gone through...and we'll just leave it at that," Thury continued. "I've had a lot of females that have come to me and have been able to talk to me about things as a female, as a mom. The balancing act... I've been there, I've done that. I walk through it with you."

Thury's focus is now on getting in front of Soldiers.

"How can I get out and meet as many people as I can and say, 'Hey, I'm your chaplain...whatever you need, you let me or your command team know and we're here for you. You don't have to do this alone.'"

Mental health awareness and supporting new recruits and the noncommissioned officers that train and oversee new recruits are also areas Thury hopes to focus on early in her chaplaincy.

"Being present for Soldiers, however they need that," Thury said. "Just building relationships, being a ministry of presence that if and when a Soldier or service member needs a chaplain, hopefully there's a relationship built and we're able to walk them through it."

“Siri, What’s the meaning of life?”

By Chaplain (Maj.) Tom Tedmon
Joint Force Headquarters

If you ask Siri, “What is the meaning of life?” Often enough, she will eventually tell you she thinks it has something to do with chocolate. I am as big a fan of chocolate as anyone, but I am not convinced that her answer really satisfies the existential question she was asked. In the Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy trilogy, we are told that the answer to the ultimate question of the universe is 42. The artificially intelligent supercomputer that provided that answer was sadly unable to posit the question.

“Why am I here?” is a question everyone asks themselves at some point in their life. It is also a question everyone must eventually answer for themselves. There are, however, some guidelines each person can follow in their quest for the answer to the great question. I offer them to you as you work through your struggle with the question.

1. Seek wholeness over happiness. Happiness is an emotion, and is, by definition, fleeting. Chasing a fleeting emotion is truly a striving after the wind, and ultimately unsatisfying. Besides, life is not all about successes and good times. Life includes failures, hard times and disappointments. Pursuit of happiness often involves denying or hiding from the bad things in life and denies a large part of who we are. That can never bring fulfillment.

2. Embrace and capitalize on your ability to choose. Life is a bit like a float trip down a river. You can’t change the direction the water flows, but you can choose how to go down it. You can ride an innertube, and just let the current carry you where it will. Or, you can get in a kayak, and choose to move closer to the bank to see the deer, or steer around the low-lying branch threatening your forehead. The second way provides a much more gratifying trip than first.

3. Be present in the present. Mindfulness is not a new concept, but it is helpful. Much of what is most satisfying in life happens in the small moments that we so easily miss with our preoccupation with the “more important” things.

4. Be deliberate. Cast a vision for yourself. Where do you want to be? How do you want to get there? Meaning in life must be pursued, not waited for. It’s a bit like the difference between trapping and hunting.

5. Don’t spend your life, invest it. Of course, in order to invest something, it must be worth something. You have to believe that your life has an intrinsic value completely independent of what others think. There are roughly 7.6 billion people on the planet today. There have been, according to the experts’ estimates, about 108 billion people who have ever lived. Out of all those people, you are completely unique. There has never been, nor ever will be, another you. That uniqueness alone imputes value. Your life is capital that can be poured into other people, institutions or causes that will outlast you, and provide a tremendous return on investment. You are completely free to choose where to invest that capital.

These guidelines can help you discover the things that motivate you, and that help you know why you get up in the morning. You can then plan ways to build more of those things into your life and live a whole, full life. That has to be a better answer than chocolate or 42.

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114th Security Forces Squadron members deploy ground burst simulators during training at a range near Joe Foss Field, Feb. 3. Ground burst simulators are used in the training environment to better prepare members for real-world scenarios and to help evaluate proper reactionary measures.

(Photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)

Officer Candidate Leslie Wangeman and Capt. Becky Linder compete in the 2018 Eastern Regional Biathlon Competition at the Ethan Allen Training Site, Jericho Vt., Jan. 26-28. Wangeman and Linder, along with their South Dakota Army National Guard teammates, competed against more than 70 biathletes from about a dozen other states to advance to the Chief, National Guard Bureau Biathlon Championship. Top finishers also had the opportunity to advance and be selected for the All-Guard Biathlon Team.

(Courtesy Photo)



Members of the South Dakota National Guard hosted the 2018 Global Strike Command Conference at Mount Rushmore, Jan. 25, which included adjutants general and senior enlisted leaders from eight states. Attendees included Gen. Robin Rand, commander of Air Force Global Strike Command and Lt. Gen. Scott Rice, director of the Air National Guard, to discuss Air National Guard contributions and initiatives.

(Photo by Capt. Chad Carlson)



(Photo by Tech. Sgt. Luke Olson)

Master Sgt. Kevin Winter, 114th Maintenance Group crew chief, inspects an F-16 Fighting Falcon while on a training deployment in support of Lobo Summit 2018 at March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, Calif., Jan. 4-19. Lobo Summit was a temporary duty assignment preparing the 114th Fighter Wing for the unit's future Air Expeditionary Forces deployment.



(Photo by Senior Airman Denise Jensen)

Soldiers with the South Dakota Army National Guard and Airmen from Ellsworth Air Force Base were recognized for their accomplishments at home and on deployments during the 2018 Black Hills Stock Show Foundation Military Appreciation Luncheon in Rapid City, Jan. 30.

South Dakota National Guard
2823 West Main Street
Rapid City, SD 57702

FOLLOW YOUR FRONTIER

The Chadron State College War Eagles finished 43rd out of 107 teams in the Army Ten-Miler, the world's third largest 10-mile race in Washington, D.C., in October.

Four CSC ROTC cadets finished around the 1 hour, 27 minute mark or earlier before the race was reclassified to recreational when the Military District of Washington deemed the high temperatures and humidity unsafe for running.

Capt. Nate Reicks said it was the first time Chadron State ROTC competed in the event which included about 35,000 runners. The CSC runners were Connor Besse of Denver, Colo., Justyn Curtis of Richmond, Ind., Calvin DePriest, Mason Marsh of Gering, Neb., Mitchell Parish of North Platte, Neb., Kalli Talbot of Rapid City, S.D., and Sam Vanderheiden of Norfolk, Neb.

ARMY TEN-MILER



Chadron State College War Eagles pose at Arlington National Cemetery in October while visiting Washington, D.C., to compete in the Army Ten-Miler.



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